



December 22, 2015

The Honorable Terry E. Branstad
Governor of Iowa
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Branstad:

This letter is sent on behalf of the Iowa Council on Homelessness (the Council), fulfilling its requirement pursuant to Iowa Code Sections 16.100A (9) (a) and 16.100A (8) (g) to advise the governor's office and make annual recommendations regarding strategies to prevent and eliminate homelessness in Iowa.

The Iowa Council on Homelessness is committed to ensuring all Iowans have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing, as well as reducing and ending homelessness. The Council members work to identify issues, raise awareness and secure resources that will allow all people without homes in Iowa to become self-sufficient. People affected include veterans, domestic violence victims, individuals diagnosed with a mental illness, substance abuse, persons experiencing a loss of income, and those enduring from other tragedies that contribute to homelessness.

For those who are homeless in Iowa, there are some areas where people can access a broader array of housing options and services; Iowa needs to strive for similar housing options and services regardless if you are a resident of the western, central or eastern region. Ensuring statewide coverage may require your administration's assistance by convening key departments to effectively and prudently manage state resources in ensuring consistent services statewide.

As a state, we continue to move in the right direction and are making measurable progress in reducing homelessness. These statistics are gathered by the Institute for Community Alliances for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) database

- In 2014, 11,638 persons utilized shelter or transitional housing, which is a 10% reduction from the figures in 2013.
- 3,694 of those experiencing homelessness in 2014 were children, with an average age of six years.

Theresa Armstrong
Iowa Department of Human Services

Blair Avitt
Consumer Representative

Allan Axen
Coralville, Iowa

Zebulon Beilke-McCallum
Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Steven Benne
Iowa Economic Development Authority

Julie Bergeson
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Committed to ensuring all Iowans have access to safe, decent and affordable housing, health care and education.

- There are approximately 5,000 (PK-12) children who were sheltered by being “doubled up” with friends or family in 2014 per the Department of Education.
- There are children who are homeless in each of Iowa’s 99 counties.
- Iowa’s provider system of homeless services include, but are not limited to shelter and domestic violence programs, community mental health centers, primary health care, PATH, and a wide array of non-profit providers.

Iowa’s provider system works daily with public and private partners to best utilize the limited resources that are available to prevent and reduce homelessness.

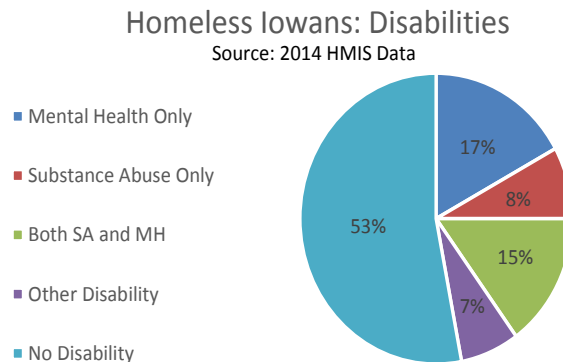
The Council members rely on collaborative relationships with colleagues from the Iowa Finance Authority and Institute for Community Alliances for their support and dedication. The Council is grateful for the professionalism, administrative support, technical and financial assistance, and partnership provided by the Iowa Finance Authority and the Institute for Community Alliances.

In 2014 a technical assistance guide and supportive materials were created in order to assist programs to meet the standards established in 2013. In 2015 work continues as the state seeks to provide every person living on the streets or in emergency shelter access to permanent housing, unless they choose to enter a longer-term treatment program instead. The goal is for every person to have access to the supports they need and want to avoid staying on the street or in shelter and move into permanent housing. This is essentially the federal definition of functional zero.

The Council is seeking assistance in the following areas:

- Legislative support to create a check-box option to Iowa Income Tax 1040 form, allowing taxpayers to contribute to homeless services in their region.
- Convene a meeting in 2016 of all pertinent state departments to assess current effective use of federal and state funds in addressing homelessness and identify potential efficiencies, and new resources.
- Review the need for lawful source-of-income anti-discrimination laws.
- Support and secure funding for permanent supportive housing in Iowa.
- Funding to support and establish a statewide assessment system to ensure the efficiency of coordinated care efforts.

The Council has compiled issues faced by Iowans experiencing homelessness and progress made in serving them:



- Many Iowans experiencing homelessness suffer from one or more disabilities, with substance abuse and mental health being most prevalent.
- The average age of those experiencing homelessness dropped from 28 years to 26 years 9 months and the number of those 55 years or older increased by over a third during the same period.
- About the same number of men and women become homeless in a given year, but more than 80% of men are unaccompanied whereas women are about equally likely to be part of a family as alone.
- With significant federal funding, Iowa statistics are indicating how the functional zero approach toward the placement of people into housing is working for veterans.

The Council invites you to attend their meeting on Tuesday, March 29, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. to address the Council, ask questions and meet some of those invested in addressing homelessness in Iowa. The Executive Committee will contact your staff in order to make arrangements.

We recognize that the executive branch requires partnership with the legislature to enact policy and legislation that ultimately improves the quality of life of Iowans. In that spirit, please know we will also be raising the above issues with legislators throughout the next session and in particular at our annual Homeless Awareness Day on the Hill, which is also March 29.

Thank you for your continued support of funding and other investment in services to Iowans especially to those experiencing homelessness. We look forward to meeting with you in March 2016!

Sincerely,



Donna J. Phillips

Chair, Iowa Council on Homelessness

CC: Amber Lewis, Iowa Finance Authority
Julie Eberbach, Institute for Community Alliances
Members of the Iowa Council on Homelessness